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| --- |
| **Concept**: Non-violence vs. Self-defense (Day One)  **Focus Question:** Which methods did civil rights leaders use to achieve their aims? How effective were these methods? |

**A. Do Now/Motivation**:

One side of class receives the question: If someone attacked you, would you fight back?

The other side receives the question: Imagine that you have a younger sibling and s/he is a witness when

someone attacks you. How would you react in order to emerge as the kind of person your little

sister/brother can look up to?

*Shareout*: Teachers should find out not only what students responded, but the reasons behind their

response. Is there a major difference in the responses of either side? What might account for this?

Teachers should make the connection between the do-now and the overall unit of the civil rights movement. Before moving on, review with students what they already know about the non-violence vs. self defense debate by starting a KWLH chart that will remain posted in the classroom.

**B. Film Viewing**

Website: [www.pbs.org./wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story](http://www.pbs.org./wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story)

*Guiding Questions:*

1. Describe what you saw in each clip, with a special focus on people and events.

2. Compare and contrast both videos, what similarities did you see? What differences did you notice?

3. Which clip struck you more and why?

*Clip One*: Chapter 4: “Non-Violent Protests” (viewing of relevant section, as determined by teacher)

*Shareout*: What did you notice?

*Clip Two*: Chapter 17: “The Black Panther Party” (viewing of relevant section)

*Shareout* and discussion of contrasts/similarities

(Teachers should gauge the reactions/responses of their class and direct discussion accordingly.)

**C.** **Group Work: Looking at Photographs**

In groups of three, students will analyze photographs that represent both perspectives. Each group will work with a different photograph.

*Guiding Questions:*

1. Discuss what you see in the picture. (Who? What? Where? How? When? Why?)

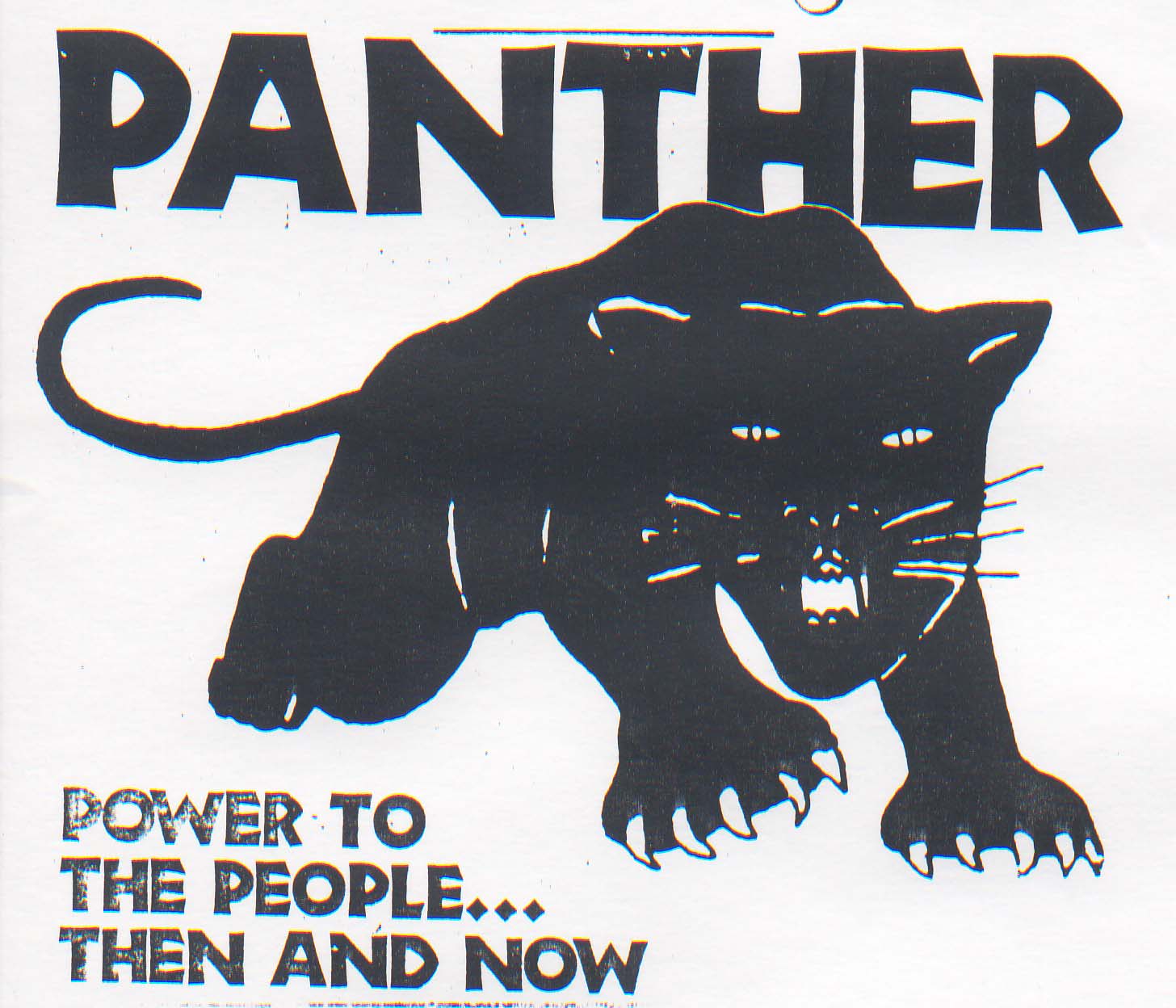
Make note of your observations.

1. Do you think this image represents the non-violent or self-defense perspective? How so?
2. What about this image suggests that the movement in question will be successful or unsuccessful?

***Sample Picture for Non-Violent Protest***



***Sample Picture for the Use of Violence for Self-Defense***



**Whole-Class Discussion**

**D. The Debate between MLK and Malcolm X**

Website: [www.pbs.org./wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story](http://www.pbs.org./wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story)

Chapter 11: “The Nation of Islam and Malcolm X” (Viewing of relevant section)

*Guiding Questions for use with t-chart:*

1. Record the views of each leader. What are their aims? Where does each man stand on the use of violence to achieve their aims?

2. Quote something powerful each man says in support of their position.

3. What are the possible merits and shortcomings of each leader’s stance?

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Guiding Questions**  **on . . .** | **Martin Luther King, Jr.** | **Malcolm X** |
| **Views** |  |  |
| **Powerful Statement** |  |  |
| **Possible**  **Pros** |  |  |
| **Possible**  **Cons** |  |  |

**Discussion**

**E. Exit Slip**: Based on today’s lesson, which method do you think is more effective? Why?

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| **Concept**: Non-violence vs. Self-defense (Day Two)  **Focus Question**: Which methods did civil rights leaders use to achieve their aims? How effective were these methods? |

**A. Return to KWL Chart from Previous Day**:

Teacher will draw attention to the KWL chart that was completed the previous day. As a review, the class will discover what can be added to the chart since the start of the last lesson. As a segue to the current day’s lesson, the teacher will review responses to the previous lesson’s exit slip. The class will discuss why they gave such responses. To conclude, the teacher will state that today the class will take a more detailed look at the proponents of nonviolence and self defense.

**B. Group work – Document Analysis**

*Robert Williams - “Is Violence Necessary to Combat Injustice? For the Positive: Williams Says ‘We Must Fight Back’”*

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. - “The Social Organization of Nonviolence”*

The teacher will divide the class into groups of three based on their exit slip from the previous class (those that supported nonviolence or self defense). Groups will be provided one of two documents; Those groups that chose nonviolence as the more effective tactic will read the Williams excerpt while those who chose self-defense shall read the King excerpt.

*Guiding Questions for comprehension:*

1. What is the aim of this civil rights leader?

2. Where does he stand on the use of violence to achieve his goal?

3. Highlight the two of the most important segments that support the author’s argument

In the following table, provide details to evaluate the method in the selection you were given. Provide at least 2 reasons and quote the article for evidence.

**Sample T-chart**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Reasons why tactic is effective** | **Reasons why tactic is ineffective** |
|  | Requires high levels of organization and patience  Evidence: “One is the approach of pure nonviolence, which cannot readily or easily attract large masses, for it requires extraordinary discipline and courage.” |
|  |  |

**“Is Violence Necessary to Combat Injustice? For the Positive: Williams Says ‘We Must Fight Back’” – Robert F. Williams[[1]](#footnote-1)**

In 1954, I was an enlisted man in the United States Marine Corps. I shall never forget the evening we (heard) the historic Supreme Court decision that segregation in the public schools is unconstitutional.

At last I felt that I was a part of America and that I belonged. That was what I had always wanted, even as a child.

I returned to civilian life in 1955 and the hope I had for Negro liberation faltered. Acts of violence and words and deeds of hate and spite rose from every quarter. There is open defiance to law and order throughout the South today. I have become disillusioned.

Laws serve to deter crime and protect the weak from the strong in civilized society. Where there is a breakdown of law, where is the force of deterrent? Only highly civilized and moral individuals respect the rights of others. The Southern brute respects only force. Nonviolence is a very potent weapon when the opponent is civilized, but nonviolence is no repellent for a sadist.

I have great respect for the pacifist, that is, for the pure pacifist. I am not a pacifist and I am sure I may safely say most of my people are not. Passive resistance is a powerful weapon in gaining concessions from oppressors, but I venture to say that if Mack Parker [a black man lynched in 1959] had had an automatic shotgun at his disposal, he could have served as a great deterrent against lynching.

In 1957 the Klan moved into Monroe and Union County (N.C.). Their numbers steadily increased to the point wherein the local press reported 7500 at one rally. They became so brazen that mile long motorcades started invading the Negro community.

These hooded thugs fired pistols from car windows. On one occasion they caught a Negro woman on the street and tried to force her to dance for them at gun point. Drivers of cards tried to run Negroes down. Lawlessness was rampant. Instead of cowing, we organized an armed guard. On one occasion, we had to exchange gunfire with the Klan.

Each time the Klan came on a raid they were led by police cars. We appealed to the President of the United States to have the Justice Department investigate the police. We appealed to Governor Luther Hodges. All out appeals to constituted law were in vain.

A group of nonviolent ministers met the City Board of Aldermen and pleaded with them to restrict the Klan from the colored community. The city fathers advised these cringing, begging Negro ministers that the Klan had constitutional rights to meet and organize the same way as the NAACP.

Not having been infected by turn-the-other-cheekism, a group of Negroes who showed a willingness to fight caused the city officials to deprive the Klan of its constitutional rights after local papers told of dangerous incidents between Klansmen and armed Negroes. Klan motorcades have been legally banned from the City of Monroe.

On May 5, 1959, while president of the Union County branch of the NAACP, I made a statement to the United Press International after a trial wherein a white man was supposed to have been tried for kicking a Negro maid down a flight of stairs in a local white hotel. In spite of the fact that there was an eyewitness, the defendant failed to show up for his trial, and was completely exonerated.

Another case in the same court involved a white man who had come to a pregnant Negro mother’s home and attempted to rape her. In recorder’s court the only defense offered for the defendant was that “he’s not guilty. He was just drunk and having a little fun.” A white woman neighbor testified that the woman had come to her house excited, her clothes torn, her feet bare and begging her for assistance; the court was unmoved.

This great miscarriage of justice left me sick inside, and I said then what I say now. I believe Negroes must be willing to defend themselves, their women, their children and their homes. They must be willing to die and to kill in repelling their assailants. Negroes *must* protect themselves, it is obvious that the federal government will not put an end to lynching; therefore it becomes necessary for us to stop lynching with violence.

Some Negroes leaders have cautioned me that if Negroes fight back, the racist will have cause to exterminate the race.

This government is in no position to allow mass violence to erupt, let alone allow twenty million Negroes to be exterminated.

It is instilled at an early age that men who violently and swiftly rise to oppose tyranny are virtuous examples to emulate. I have been taught by my government to fight. Nowhere in the annals of history does the record show a people delivered from bondage by patience alone.

**“The Social Organization of Nonviolence” – Martin Luther King Jr.[[2]](#footnote-2)**

Here one must be clear that there are three different views on the subject of violence. One is the approach of pure nonviolence, which cannot readily or easily attract large masses, for it requires extraordinary discipline and courage. The second is violence exercised in self-defense, which all societies, from the most primitive to the most cultured and civilized, accept as moral and legal.

The principle of self-defense, even involving weapons and bloodshed, has never been condemned, even by Gandhi, who sanctioned it for those unable to master pure nonviolence. The third is the advocacy of violence as a tool of advancement, organized as in warfare, deliberately and consciously. To this tendency many Negroes are being tempted today. There are incalculable perils in this approach. It is not the danger of sacrifice of physical being which is primary, though it cannot be contemplated without a sense of deep concern for human life. The greatest danger is that it will fail to attract Negroes to a real collective struggle, and will confuse the large uncommitted middle group, which as yet has not supported either side. Further, it will mislead Negroes into the belief that this is the only path and place them as a minority in a position where they confront a far larger adversary than it is possible to defeat in this form of combat. When the Negro uses force in self-defense he does not forfeit support-he may even win it, by the courage and self-respect it reflects. When he seeks to initiate violence he provokes questions about the necessity for it, and inevitably is blamed for its consequences. It is unfortunately true that however the Negro acts, his struggle will not be free of violence initiated by his enemies, and he will need ample courage and willingness to sacrifice to defeat this manifestation of violence. But if he seeks it and organizes it, he cannot win…

The Negro people can organize socially to initiate many forms of struggle which can drive their enemies back without resort to futile and harmful violence. In the history of the movement,….many creative forms have been developed-the mass boycott, sitdown protests and strikes, sit-ins-refusal to pay fines and bail for unjust arrests-mass marches-mass meetings-prayer pilgrimages, etc.

There is more power in socially organized masses on the march than there is in guns in the hands of a few desperate men. Our enemies would prefer to deal with a small armed group rather than a huge, unarmed but resolute mass of people. However, it is necessary that the mass-action method be persistent and unyielding. Gandhi said the Indian people must “never let them rest,” referring to the British. He urged them to keep protesting daily and weekly, in a variety of ways. This method inspired and organized the Indian masses and disorganized and demobilized the British. It educates its myriad participants, socially and morally. All history teaches us that like a turbulent ocean beating great cliffs into fragments of rock, the determined movement of people incessantly demanding their rights always disintegrates the old order.

**C. Class Discussion:**

Teacher will lead a debriefing in which the class discusses their observations from each article.

**D. Closing Assessment – Persuasive Essay**:

Using the T-chart, article and their knowledge from the previous day’s lesson, each student will compose a persuasive essay in which they articulate their view on the nonviolence v. self-defense argument. In the essay, the student will clearly argue one viewpoint on the issue and provide ample evidence to support their claims.

**Possible Extensions:**

* ***Class Debate concerning the issue of nonviolence vs. self-defense***
* ***Class discussion about which method is more effective for resolving today’s conflicts***
* ***Students create skit portraying how each tactic might be applied in their own lives***

1. Originally published in *Liberator* magazine, September 1959. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Originally published in *Liberation* magazine, October 1959. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)